September 10, 1973.

Department of Defense Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos

INTRODUCTION

On August 9, 1973, Senator Symington asked that the Department of Defense undertake a review of statistics sent to the Congress and also of the circumstances that lay behind the submission of those statistics. He asked for a "*simple, concise account*" which specified what orders were given; the special security communications channels used; the actions of the military commands; and the reports filed—especially in those cases in which errors ultimately occurred in reports to Congress.

This report responds to Senator Symington's request for such a "simple and concise" account. In further compliance with the Congressional request, this report is limited to Southeast Asia operations in which special reporting procedures had an impact on the data that were provided to the Congress. A separate report is being submitted containing a corrected update of the unclassified statistics provided in June, 1973.

The review has established that all operations discussed in this report were authorized by civilian authority. It should also be noted that operations for which special security and reporting procedures were established and utilized constituted a small portion of the overall spectrum of Southeast Asia military operations. This paper, therefore, deals with the exceptions in these operations—not the rule.

The Department of Defense has recognized the interest of the Congress in the submission of this report at the earliest feasible date. However, there are still some unknowns. They are limited in the context of the widespread, well-publicized, and thoroughly documented main thrust of the Southeast Asia conflict. Understandably, too, not all events at the operating levels can be described in exactly corresponding detail. Those uncertainties are identified in this report, and the Department will continue its review in an attempt to resolve the unknowns and uncertainties if at all possible.

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There are differences between some of the statistics in this report and those contained in the May, 1973 submission of *classified* statistics. The May submission did not identify the helicopter gunship sorties shown in the attached reports on SALEM HOUSE and PRAIRIE FIRE. We are now preparing an update of those helicopter gunship statistics and verifying the May, 1973, data on fixed-wing gunship sorties. In addition, the casualty statistics in the separate statistical update are the best available. However, we are continuing our review of a few individual cases.

AIR MISSIONS OVERVIEW

This section will review the following air operations:

Menu: B–52 operations in Cambodia, March 17, 1969 to May 26, 1970. Missions were carried out based on intelligence of substantial North Vietnamese (NVN) and Viet Cong (VC) buildups in Cambodian sanctuary areas at the time of both impending and actual American troop withdrawals under President Nixon's plan which brought home the more than one-half million Americans fighting in Vietnam.

Good look: B–52 operations in the Plaine Des Jarres (PDJ) region of Laos from February 17, 1970, to April 20, 1972. Those missions were authorized in response to the request of the Royal Laotian Government.

Patio: Fighter-bomber (TACAIR) operations in Cambodia augmenting MENU operations during April-May 1970.

Freedom deal: Fighter-bomber TACAIR operations in Cambodia from May, 1970 to August, 1973.

Several general statements apply to all air operations conducted during this period. First, throughout the period of U.S. Southeast Asia involvement, the accounting and reporting methods for air operations were steadily improved. The JCS automated data base that was developed made information available to large numbers of people, with varying information requirements and for which varying information aggregations were needed and appropriate.

Secondly, in order to assure optimum effectiveness in command and control and to minimize the opportunity for error, a number of communications channels and means were authorized and used. The choice of the communicating channel was determined by the requirements for security, for transmission speed, for detailed content, etc. The availability of multiple communications channels, and the coincident use of both highly secure and routine channels for transmission of data of differing sensitivities but relating to the same operation was not unique to these operations; nor for that matter, was it unique to this war. Materials were routinely handled in the channel most appropriate to the required degree of security. High-security channels—referred to as special security or "back" channels—were reserved for highly-classified messages and extremely sensitive background information passed among top-level commanders.

Finally, while the amount of collected data—statistics and records—on U.S. combat activities in Southeast Asia are more extensive than during any other war, there are still gaps in our ability to retrieve some information. It is felt, however, that the data available, as presented, allow for reasonable and responsible assessment of the various operations for which the Congress has requested this review.

A basic characteristic of these air operations was that they were conducted in and over countries whose political leaders were either unwilling or unable to acknowledge publicly such activity. At the time, these same political leaders had either requested the operations or had knowledge of and acquiesced in them. The Cambodian bombing during Prince Sihanouk's regime, as well as the subsequent U.S./ARVN ground operations into Cambodia were directed toward denying the enemy sanctuaries, protecting American lives and providing a tactical environment which would permit the safe withdrawal of U.S. combat forces under President Nixon's withdrawal plan.

MENU OPERATIONS

General

On March 18, 1969, B–52s were used for the first time against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army elements located in Cambodian sanctuaries adjacent to the South Vietnamese border. The name MENU was given this operation, and it continued through May 26, 1970. The purpose of MENU was to protect American lives during the preparation for and actual withdrawal of U.S. military personnel from Southeast Asia by pre-empting imminent enemy offensive actions

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from the Cambodian sanctuaries into South Vietnam and against U.S. servicemen and women.

Due to the unusual and sensitive diplomatic situation between the Cambodian government and the governments of the United States and South Vietnam, information on MENU was held very closely. Knowledge of the operation was limited to those personnel essential to its successful administration and execution. The special security or "back" channel communication system for insuring optimum security in highly sensitive matters was used for TOP SECRET sensitive aspects of MENU. Less highly classified channels were used to handle the routine mission requests and authorizations. The approval/execution procedures for MENU are discussed on pages 8–10. Special security procedures are discussed on pages 15–18.

The following is a summary of MENU methodology adopted and utilized by field units and in the military chain of command:

A B–52 strike on a target in South Vietnam would be requested through normal communication and command channels.

Through the special security communication and command channel, a strike on the MENU (Cambodian) target nearest a requested target in South Vietnam would be requested.

Upon approval, the mission would be flown in such a way that the MENU aircraft on its final run would pass over or near the target in South Vietnam and release its bombs on the enemy in the MENU sanctuary target area.

On return of the aircraft to its base, routine reports on the mission would be filed in normal communication channels which did not reveal the MENU aspect of the mission.

Separate reports were provided by "back" channel on the MENU aspect.

All MENU sorties occurred at night and were directed by ground control radar sites. These radar sites were used to direct aircraft throughout the Southeast Asia conflict, and their operation permitted extremely accurate strikes against the enemy. The name for this ground-directed bombing operation was COMBAT SKYSPOT. In MENU operations, the radar site crews received instructions that resulted in the aircraft releasing their bombs on the MENU targets rather than on the targets in South Vietnam. Details of radar procedures are discussed on pages 10–11.

In their pre-take off mission preparation, all the B–52 crews were briefed on the South Vietnamese targets. Only the pilots and navigators of the aircraft to be directed to MENU targets were briefed to react to all directions for bomb release from the ground control radar sites. This special guidance to MENU pilots and navigators was necessary since the entire crew was briefed routinely, as they normally had been throughout the war, to make every effort not to bomb in Cambodia. The pilots and navigators, while not controlling the exact release point of their bombs, had indications from on-board radar and navigation instruments of their position. Other crew members had no indication that their aircraft was directed on other than the target in South Vietnam which had been covered in their routine briefing since the MENU target was in close proximity to and in alignment with the routine target. Details of MENU aircrew procedures are discussed on pages 11–12.

MENU mission reports were carried in both the routine and special security communications channels depending on their degree of security sensitivity. Reports on the sensitive aspects, which were sent through the special security channel, were available only to those in the command and control chain who had a "need-to-know." Reports based on the routine channels, so that for administrative and logistical purposes, MENU sortie information blended into other less highly classified information in the data base. MENU sorties thus properly were included in overall Southeast Asia statistical totals but not identified with Cambodia in any but the special security channels. When the routine data was subsequently utilized in providing Congress a country-by-country breakout of sorties—first in classified and then in unclassified form—the MENU sorties were reflected in South Vietnam as they were routinely carried in that data base, rather than in Cambodia as they were carried in the closely held MENU records.

This error was subsequently discovered, corrected and apologized for.

The Department's review of MENU operations gave particular attention to the procedures directed for providing inputs to the formal reporting system that accounted for the operational and logistic aspects of this operation. The review established that under the procedures directed no one was required to make any input to this formal reporting system that the individual knew, or should have known, to be incorrect. The procedures permitted only correct formal reporting. There was careful selection of individuals who, in addition to TOP SECRET

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clearance, had a need-to-know about MENU. Everyone in the reporting chain received and reported that information for which he had a need-to-know. Those who had no need-to-know about MENU could not perceive a difference between MENU and any other sorties. Any reports they submitted were within the normal reporting procedures.

With regard to the originally erroneous statistics inadvertently furnished to the Congress, and through the Congress to the public, the high-security classification and closely-held character of the information resulted in the error. Steps have been taken to assure that in the future the automated data systems themselves, and attendant procedures, will be so structured that any need for special-security policy decisions will be brought to the attention of proper civilian leaders for their decision as well as policy matters such as declassification. It must be stressed again that despite the inadvertent, erroneous report to Congress all appropriate civilian and military decision makers had accurate and complete command and control data throughout MENU.

Approval /Execution

To understand the approval, execution and special reporting procedures used during MENU, normal B–52 reporting procedures must be understood. For normal missions in South Vietnam, The Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (COMUSMACV) originated a "strike request" for targets against which missions would be flown for the next 24-hour period. This request—which was dispatched to Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), Commander in Chief Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC), the operating units, and the JCS—showed time-over-target, target coordinates, weight of effort recommended, and a mission identifier (usually a letter and three numbers). While this message was termed a "strike request," COMUSMACV and CINCSAC had standing authority to conduct B–52 missions in South Vietnam. COMUSMACV did however routinely transmit each "strike request" to CINCPAC, CINCSAC and JCS to provide them the opportunity to review—and to disapprove should that be necessary for some overriding reason—any mission.

Subsequently, a "frag order" was issued by the operating headquarters, which originally was Third Air Division and subsequently was Eighth Air Force. This "frag order" was basically a mission-profile order which narratively described how the mission was to be conducted. It noted ground control check-in points, target size, altitude and bombing tactics. The "strike request" and the "frag order" were the only two documents necessary for the conduct of the missions which contained target coordinates. In the absence of a disapproval, CINCSAC issued an execution order by mission identifier and "frag order" number. This order authorized the planned strike and established the take-off time.

In the event a mission was to be directed to another target, a "strike request amendment" was issued which imposed such changes from the original "frag order" as might be required.

After weapons release, the aircrew would initiate the post-strike reporting procedure with a radio call to the command post in Guam, giving time over target and mission success codes (type of release, malfunctions, weather, etc.). The Guam command post then initiated an operational report (OPREP–4) of the mission to SAC Headquarters. The OPREP–4s showed only mission identifier, number and type of aircraft, time-over-target, and the guidance system utilized. SAC retransmitted the OPREP–4s to the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS). The OPREP–4s and the "strike request" constituted the principal input for the JCS data base.

MENU procedures were designed to parallel and complement the routine B–52 procedures. If, for example, COMUSMACV was authorized a level of 60 B–52 sorties a day, he would, through the routine procedure, identify routine targets for all 60 of these sorties. Through the special communication channel he also would transmit a special request, classified TOP SECRET, to strike MENU targets in Cambodia.

Requests for MENU strikes came to the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from COMUSMACV after review and validation by CINCPAC. Each request included current intelligence confirming that no Cambodians were known to be located in the enemy target area. After appraisal of the request by the OJCS, a brief memorandum was sent to the Secretary of Defense requesting him to obtain authority to conduct the MENU strikes. Only after additional appropriate civilian authority was obtained did the Secretary of Defense authorize the OJCS to dispatch an execute message. When transmitted, this execute order went through the special security channels.

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COMUSMACV then had in hand two authorizations: The routine message approving targets for all 60 sorties; and the second message approving the MENU sorties that would be diverted from South Vietnamese targets. After MENU strike approval authority had been obtained, a time-over-target was assigned for each MENU target from one of the previously designated times contained in the routine MACV "strike request". Thus, by using time-over-target and mission identifier, the limited number of personnel who had a need-to-know about the MENU missions could correlate the routine operational data with the MENU missions, and correctly identify the number of sorties flown and ordnance expended in the MENU operation.

The routine sorties were retained as alternate targets should the Cambodian targets subsequently be disapproved or should COMUSMACV make a later determination that the routine targets in South Vietnam were of higher value than the MENU targets in Cambodia. Meanwhile, the execute order for normal missions was issued by CINCSAC. The MENU aircraft were then directed away from the routine to the MENU targets by implementation at the radar site of directions in the closehold MENU message which was provided to each applicable radar site (see Radar Procedures, below). Thus, from a military standpoint, the MENU procedures were identical to normal, routine procedures except that the orders diverting the mission to Cambodia never entered the routine OJCS data base.

Radar Procedures

As noted earlier, B–52 sorties were directed and controlled over their targets by COMBAT SKYSPOT radar. These all-weather bombing-control ground radar facilities (MSQs) were manned by SAC personnel and contained SAC equipment; but the sites were under the operational control of the U.S. Seventh Air Force (TACAIR) headquartered at Tan Son Nhut Airbase, South Vietnam. These radars controlled all MENU missions. For routine missions, the COMBAT SKYSPOT site received the South Vietnam target information by normal message channels. The radar-site crew then prepared the required plotting charts, computations, worksheets, computer input tapes, forms, and other data necessary to conduct each mission. Included was preparation of 1st Combat Evaluation Group Form 15, a form used by the ground radar sites to carry post-release data such as time-over-target, track, airspeed, altitude and ground speed of the aircraft at release.

Prior to a MENU operation, a representative from the Strategic Air Command Advanced Echelon (SACADVON) at MACV Headquarters in Saigon went to the radar site with the MENU target information. A new set of computations and forms was then prepared at the radar site using the MENU target information. After a MENU strike, the MENU post-release data were entered on the Form 15 which had been prepared earlier based on the routine Vietnamese target coordinates. The highly-classified MENU target information, including computations, worksheets and the plotting board trace sheet showing the aircraft's final track to the target, was then destroyed in order to preserve the security of the operation. The Form 15 showing the South Vietnamese target and post-release data was forwarded to Saigon for maintenance and quality control purposes and destroyed after 90 days. This was normal procedure for all B–52 missions. The Form 15 was not a command and control report. The only formal, official report required of and issued after a MENU mission by the ground-control radar site was "mission complete" relayed to SACADVON by telephone.

The foregoing procedures to obtain necessary reports and to preserve security were developed and authorized by MACV. Initially, for security reasons, the SACADVON representative personally went to the radar site to assure that personnel without need-to-know of MENU were not involved. The SACADVON representative remained during conduct of the MENU mission. He retained possession of the radar-site's MENU working material and returned to his Saigon headquarters where he destroyed it. Later, the procedure was modified so that a SACADVON courier was flown to an airstrip near the radar site and handed the MENU target coordinates to the radar site commander; security destruction of the MENU working materials was accomplished at the radar site.

In addition to the MSQ radar sites, MENU B–52 operations came under the surveillance of Ground Control Intercept (GCI) radar sites whose mission was to monitor all flights in their assigned zone to, among other missions, assure that buffer airspace along the South Vietnam-Cambodian border was not penetrated by unauthorized flights. Under routine circumstances, the GCI sites would track and warn any aircraft that appeared to be heading into either the buffer zone or Cambodian airspace. These sites then would report any possible violations of

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Cambodian airspace. Pursuant to instructions from Seventh Air Force (issued by a personal representative's visit to the GCI site), officers on duty at those sites took no action to warn or to report the MENU missions since they had been informed that these were authorized missions.

Air Crew Procedures

Authorization for B–52 missions in South Vietnam routinely proceeded as described in pages 8–10. CINCSAC received authorization from OJCS and in turn ordered the missions to be flown in the regular manner. CINCSAC issued implementing instructions to the Commander, Third Air Division—later to Eighth Air Force—who passed the orders to the B–52 operational units. Missions would be assigned to flight units in the normal manner, appropriate preparations made and crew briefings carried out. These were routine procedures for B–52 ARC LIGHT strikes in South Vietnam and Laos.

For MENU missions, sorties were ordered, prepared and briefed according to routine procedures and were based on information relating to the targets in South Vietnam. This procedure was adequate, since the geographical locations of the MENU targets weer proximate to the South Vietnam targets, and since the heading for final bomb runs on the MENU targets took the crews close to the South Vietnam targets. The only variance from the routine required for the MENU mission would be to slightly extend the release point of the bombload as directed by the MSQ site as the plane flew on its final heading, and in some cases a minor correction to the heading itself. Accordingly, for MENU missions, SAC representatives briefed the pilots and navigators that they would receive corrections in heading and bomb release instructions from the radar sites and that they should follow those instructions.

Only the pilots and navigators were in a position to know they were in fact striking targets in Cambodia. And, because of the special MENU orders to GCI radar sites to disregard penetration of Cambodian airspace by MENU missions, the regular warning these crews might have expected upon a penetration of Cambodia were not received.

These procedures were virtually identical to those used for normal B–52 ARC LIGHT operations. The only significant variation was in the designation of personnel with a need-to-know about MENU. Each command level recommended to its superior the numbers and duties of personnel who had a MENU need-to-know. Normally this access was limited to unit commanders, unit vice commanders, limited numbers of operations and intelligence staff personnel, and the aircraft commander and navigator on B–52s directly involved.

Reporting

This section discusses the various reports submitted for all B–52 operations. These reports, in conjunction with the strike request and mission frag orders, were structured to provide planning data, logistic data and information on operations conducted. The types of reports discussed are reports of B–52 tactical operations, OPREP–4; crew debriefing reports; and reports by supporting radar facilities.

After weapons release, the aircrew initiated the post-strike reporting system with a radio call directly to the command post in Guam, giving time-over-target and missions success codes (type of release, malfunctions, weather, fuel reserves, etc.). Based on this information—and after correlating it with pre-mission data—the Guam command post initiated an operational report (OPREP–4) of the mission to SAC Headquarters. The OPREP–4s show only mission identifier, number and type of aircraft, time-over-target, and the guidance system utilized. SAC retransmitted the OPREP–4s to MACV and to the OJCS. The OPREP–4 and the "strike request" provided the basic input to the automated data base.

The use made of this data base is important to clear understanding of MENU reporting. The data base was designed primarily for administrative and logistics uses rather than for operational or intelligence purposes. This information had to reflect the total number of B–52 sorties flown and the munitions expended in order to meet the requirements of DoD logisticians. To assure continuing adequate support of B–52 operations, logisticians needed to know the number of hours and missions each aircraft was being flown, which influenced the amount of fuel and munitions required; the number of spart parts to procure; the number of personnel needed and similar support necessary. In addition, there was a need for administrative purposes to identify and report the operational employment of the B–52 aircraft. However, most of those who normally followed this in-

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formation had a need-to-know only about the extent of the effort and not the location specifics that distinguished MENU. Whether these missions took place in South Vietnam or several miles inside Cambodia was neither material nor relevant to their requirements. However, if the information on MENU sorties had been totally deleted from the data base reports, not only would the necessary administrative and logistics actions based on these data have been hindered, but the personnel dealing with the data would quickly have perceived that some operations were being conducted but not entered in the OJCS routine data base.

Accurate data on MENU operations were maintained at MACV, Headquarters SAC, and the OJCS. These data were based on the mission identifier and target coordinates in the basic MENU authorization message as missions were confirmed by the routine OPREP–4 reports.

SAC procedures required an intelligence debriefing of all aircrews after combat missions. The form used by the intelligence officer was keyed to the mission identifier; target coordinates—unless the crews indicated a change (under MENU operations the actual target coordinates were not passed to the aircrews by the MSQ site)—were listed only as associated with the original mission identifier. Debriefing of MENU crews proceeded routinely with crews reporting malfunctions, bomb damage assessment, weather and other operational data. The intelligence report forwarded for a MENU mission was indistinguishable, in the view of the intelligence officer, from other such mission reports. The debriefers did not have a need-to-know about MENU; and all submitted debriefing material that was, to the best of their knowledge, complete and accurate.

No formal report was required from MSQ radar site personnel. Only a telephone call to SACADVON indicated mission completion. No formal written report was required.

The GCI radar sites in South Vietnam were tasked to report unauthorized airspace penetrations by U.S. or other friendly aircraft. Personnel at these sites were aware that MENU flights were authorized and for that reason, no reports of violations were required or submitted.

Statistics

During the MENU operation, six enemy base sanctuary areas along the South Vietnam/Cambodian border were struck. These base areas were named: BREAKFAST, DINNER, DESSERT, SNACK, SUPPER and LUNCH.

As the combat action developed during the ground operations in Cambodia in early May and June 1970, the requirement for special security procedures was lifted. The last MENU strike to use special procedures in South Vietnam was on May 26, 1970. The sorties and total tonnage of munitions dropped from March 18, 1969 to May 26, 1970, during MENU were as follows:

Base area	Sorties	Ton
350 (dessert)	706	20,157
351 (snack)	885	25,336
352 (dinner)	817	23,391
353 (breakfast)	228	6,529
609 (lunch)	992	26,630
704 (supper)	247	6,780
Total	3,875	108,823

Special Security Procedures

This section discusses the actions necessary to provide special security and identifies responsibility for the development of these procedures and the granting of authority for their use. This section is supplemented by and must be viewed together with the preceding sections on Approval/Execution Procedures, Radar Procedures, Air Crew Procedures, and Reporting Procedures.

The first major opportunity for compromise of the security necessary to permit MENU operations was through the normal unclassified reporting of B–52 operations. On days when there were MENU missions, the number of MENU sorties may have constituted as much as 60 percent of the B–52 missions. This was a sufficiently large portion of the total that failure to indicate a level of operation consistent with the total missions would have almost certainly led to speculation that unreported operations were being conducted. For this reason, the procedures supporting MENU operations included the selection of cover

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targets in South Vietnam which would indicate a level of activity consistent with the clearly observable number of B–52 missions launched. This selection of cover targets provided the same type of security cover historically characteristic of military operations of particular sensitivity.

The necessity to minimize the likelihood of public speculation or disclosure was established within the NSC. Procedures were designed to assure security and at the same time to provide public information that would be as complete as was consistent with security. NSC guidance issued for the first MENU mission—which remained representative of the guidance for all MENU missions—directed that the MACV daily press release report missions on "Enemy activity, base camps and bunker and tunnel complexes 45 kilometers northeast of Tay Ninh city." U.S. B–52s did on that date so strike, and MACV's press release so reported. On subsequent missions specific cover targets were drawn from those already nominated by MACV in their routine B–52 "strike request" message. MACV issued its subsequent press statements as directed, listing generalized cover-target locations but not specifying their exact relationship to the South Vietnam-Cambodian border. Normally the generalized cover-target locations noted were actually struck, typically in the priority MACV had assigned them in their South Vietnam requests. In every instance the generalized press guidance would deal with an approved and executed South Vietnam strike taken from the MACV request or would reflect a general geographic locale without specifying that the target—listed as so many kilometers from a reference point in South Vietnam—was, in fact, in Cambodia.

Consistent with the objective of providing information as complete as possible within security requirements, guidance also was provided on responses to possible specific inquiries about Cambodian operations. MACV was instructed that if faced with specific inquiries, they should neither confirm nor deny attacks in Cambodia but state the situation would be investigated. The responsibility and authority for any other response to persistent inquiries was retained by the appropriate civilian authorities. There were no persistent inquiries so it was not necessary to implement any further guidance. The Department of Defense, thus, never publicly either confirmed or denied the conduct of MENU strikes.

Another major opportunity for compromise of security was the requirement that operational data be provided within DoD for daily use. This administrative requirement, treated on page 13, was as matters evolved, not affected by the sensitive MENU aspects of the missions. The routine reports were sufficient for administrative and logistical purposes and were considered in those cases complete and accurate.

The responsibility for development of detailed MENU procedures was delegated to the levels in DoD that normally controlled these procedures. The OJCS was responsible for the data reporting system. It was and is characteristic of the DoD automated data system that the information contained in this system must be available to many personnel whose security clearances are limited to SECRET and who had no need-to-know about MENU. Because of this, and because MENU was especially sensitive, it was not possible to include within the automated data base the accurate target locations for MENU strikes. For this reason, MENU strikes were not carried in the data base as having occurred in Cambodia. They were simply identified by the target identifier carried in the original B–52 "strike request" and "frag order" messages and, as a result, appeared in the data base with the data for South Vietnam. MENU procedures were designed so that no procedures in the reporting chain had to be modified to comply with this limitation in the automated data system. Other than the non-recording of the "strike request amendment" (MENU authorization), all of the official reports which fed into this automated data system were simply allowed to routinely reflect the data normally carried.

Data peculiar to the MENU strikes were maintained manually in MACV, SAC and in the OJCS and were available to those with a need-to-know. They were not introduced into any automated data base.

CINCSAC was responsible for development of crew reporting procedures consistent with MENU security and no changes were required for MENU in normal SAC crew reporting procedures. Crew briefing and notification procedures were proposed by the Commander Third Air Division, and approved by CINCSAC and OJCS. See Reporting, Pages 12–14.

The procedures for providing MENU data to the MSQ radar sites were developed by MACV. Both CINCSAC and OJCS were informed on these procedures.

The Strategic Air Command Advanced Echelon (SACADVON) acted as the

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principal coordinator and technical planner for MENU operations. SACADVON was a liaison unit for CINCSAC located at MACV Headquarters to assist with the B–52 effort. This unit had no independent command authority and was in Saigon only to assist COMUSMACV and to expedite staffing between the two headquarters. SACADVON also had the responsibility for establishing direct contact with the MSQ radar sites and for receiving oral reports of mission completion from these sites. SACADVON also provided B–52 strike location information—including geographically-generalized cover-target location information when necessary—to the MACV Office of Information (MACOI). No one in MACOI had a need-to-know about MENU details.

As noted in the General section, the MENU procedures permitted only correct formal reporting. Everyone in the reporting chain received that information which he had a need-to-know and received it in accordance with routine procedures. Thus, those who did not have a need-to-know about MENU could not perceive a difference between MENU and normal operations. Those who had a need-to-know about MENU operations submitted and received reports that were consistent with their knowledge. Each of the operational reports submitted provided complete and accurate information to those who required it.

The Department understands that selected members of Congress were advised of the MENU strikes by various persons in the Executive Branch who were monitoring MENU. Previous testimony and transmittals to the Congress have included information that among those notified were Senators Russell, Stennis and Dirksen, and Representatives Rivers, Arends and Gerald Ford.

Some other members of Congress may have been advised, but the Department, itself, holds no specific record detailing this. The Department understands that the decisions on whom to advise in the Congress were made by the notifying Executive Branch individuals who apparently took into account the extremely sensitive diplomatic situation and the strict orders for security. The restricting of MENU information within the Legislative Branch was consistent with similar strict restrictions within the Executive Branch.

GOOD LOOK

On February 17, 1970, B–52s were used for the first time to bomb military targets in the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) area at the request of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG). The name GOOD LOOK was used for these operations, and their immediate purpose was to counter the buildup of approximately 15,000 North Vietnamese personnel and their supplies north and east of the PDJ area and poised for an imminent effort to recapture this area.

The first B–52 mission came in response to a specific request to the U.S. Ambassador to Laos from Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma requesting B–52 sorties to help Laotian General Vang Pao's troops hold the PDJ by blunting the anticipated North Vietnamese offensive. The transmission of this request and of all later mission requests for B–52 bombing in the PDJ area were made through the U.S. Ambassador to Laos. The original requests were validated by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC and were then forwarded with supporting intelligence to CJCS. After appraisal by the Joint Staff, CJCS requested authority from appropriate civilian authorities to conduct the requested mission.

After January 1, 1972, COMUSMACV was given authority to approve B–52 missions in the PDJ area, subject to cancellation by the Secretary of Defense.

It was the nature of the B–52 operations in Southeast Asia that they were routinely controlled by ground radars. Where this was not possible, the B–52 onboard radar systems were used to locate and strike targets. The PDJ area initially fell outside the capabilities of ground radar systems. For this reason, radar scope photography was needed of the PDJ area as a part of normal planning to have the ability to respond to any contingency. Such reconnaissance was understood and accepted by the RLG. Accordingly, a B–52 radar reconnaissance mission, GOOD LOOK ALPHA, was authorized and flown over the area in August, 1969.

After the enemy offensive in the PDJ area began in late January, 1970, a second radar reconnaissance mission, GOOD LOOK BRAVO, was flown. This mission was authorized in the hope that Hanoi would perceive the warning that B–52 operations were being considered in the PDJ, and would modify its operations in northern Laos. There was no apparent NVN diminution in combat operations, and follow-on B–52 sorties were directed under the name GOOD LOOK, A ground-directed radar bombing site was later located at Ubon, Thailand, to direct the GOOD LOOK missions.

Restrictions on disclosure of the U.S. strikes in the PDJ area were responsive to the Royal Laotian Government. All message traffic to Washington on GOOD LOOK was classified TOP SECRET and was processed through special security

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channels. Subordinate command elements were directed to handle this information on a close-hold, limited distribution basis. As a result, for each B–52 PDJ area target request submitted through special security channels, a corresponding routine request for a mission in southern Laos, South Vietnam, or Cambodia was originated through routine communication channels. Post-strike reports were not identified by location of target but rather by a mission identifier and a time-over-target which coincided with the routine mission. At the same time, actual target information was being furnished on a strict, need-to-know basis through special security channels. The need for extra security had been established by the U.S. Ambassador to Laos based on the expressed concern of the Laotian Government. Missions through April 26, 1972, continued to use the special target reporting system.

The sorties and total tonnage of munitions dropped from February 17, 1970 to April 17, 1973, in the Laotian PDJ area are provided in the following summary:

Year	Sorties	Tonnage
1970[1]	147	4,217
1971[1]	270	6,513
1972[1]	1,051	25,097
1973	1,050	22,547

[1] Sorties from Feb. 17, 1970, to Apr. 16, 1972, (1,076 sorties) used cover targets in the following areas: 896 in southern Laos, 166 in South Vietnam, and 14 in Cambodia.

PATIO

In addition to the special MENU operations conducted by B–52s, complementary U.S. tactical air was employed in Cambodia for a brief period prior to the initiation of ground operations there by friendly forces on April 30, 1970. Targets for these tactical sorties were of a more transitory nature than MENU targets and were therefore more suited to tactical fighters than B–52s. The name PATIO was given these tactical air missions.

On April 18, 1970, COMUSMACV requested that special authority be granted for a 30-day period to employ tactical air against maneuvering enemy personnel and material located in a narrow are of northeastern Cambodia about eight miles wide and adjacent to the South Vietnamese border. COMUSMACV's request was based on increased sightings of enemy force movements in this area. Attack of these targets was deemed essential to prudent military conduct of the conflict in South Vietnam and especially to the protection of the lives of U.S. military personnel during the continuing U.S. redeployment program. On April 20, 1970, with the concurrence of appropriate civilian authorities, CJCS approved the requested authority. On April 25, 1970, the PATIO authority was extended to a uniform depth of 18 miles into Cambodia. The results of each day's operations were to be reported through special communications channels addressed only to those with an absolute need-to-know. The first PATIO strikes were on April 24, 1970.

Instructions, authorizations, and requests pertaining to all PATIO operations were handled on a close-hold basis. All message traffic, including strike reports and bomb damage assessment, relating to the PATIO operations was transmitted via special security channels and further restricted by instructions to deliver to designated addressees only. Thus, because of this high classification, the first 124 of the total of 156 PATIO sorties were inadvertently not included in the less-highly classified automated data base.

On May 11, 1970, a one-time expansion of the PATIO authority was granted by CJCS, with Secretary of Defense approval, authorizing the employment of tactical air against a lucrative enemy truck park and storage area in Cambodia near the Laotian border and along the XeKong river—outside the then-standard 18 mile PATIO zone.

COMUSMACV had advised that this special PATIO effort would be limited to a 12-hour period, with a planned weight of effort of 48 strike sorties. The Seventh Air Force specified that cover targets in Laos would be used for this special, one-time mission. The operation was conducted as planned on May 14, 1970, with 32 sorties expended under Forward Air Controller (FAC) control. The remaining 16 strike sorties were not required for adequate target coverage and were subsequently cancelled.

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The assigned cover targets in Laos were used in the routine reports and were recorded in the automated data base. Special communication channel reports, however, gave the complete details on the targets struck and the bomb damage assessment to all those with a need-to-know. The automated data base has been updated to correctly reflect all of the 156 PATIO sorties with their correct target locations.

FREEDOM DEAL

The name for U.S. TACAIR operations in Cambodia beginning on June 30, 1970 was FREEDOM DEAL. The term FREEDOM DEAL designated an area generally east of the Mekong River in northeastern Cambodia within which the U.S. would conduct air interdiction operations in addition to the ongoing air support for U.S. ground forces inside South Vietnam and near the South Vietnam-Cambodia border. These air interdiction operations, following the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from Cambodia at the end of June, 1970, were requested by the Cambodian Government, processed through MACV channels, and authorized by appropriate U.S. civilian authority. By August 23, 1970, the original FREEDOM DEAL area had been expanded southward approximately 50 miles and westward approximately 50 miles. Both of these expansions were designed to allow attack of enemy military targets which threatened the remaining and redeploying U.S. forces in South Vietnam.

Normal operational reporting was made on all U.S. air operations under the FREEDOM DEAL authority. An exception pertained to special authority, requested from the granted by appropriate U.S. civilian authorities, to employ U.S. air power in interdicting enemy supply lines and caches on the supply trails and river routes being used by the enemy, particularly in situations which involved a serious threat to any major Cambodian positions. Instruction in the field relating to the reporting of such operations which occurred outside the designated FREEDOM DEAL areas stipulated, as they had for the PATIO operations conducted earlier, that special security communications channels would be employed. The requirement to report these air strike data via special security communications channels presented difficulties for those field units not possessing the special communications equipment. This difficulty, coupled with the need to insure accurate statistical accounting of sorties flown, flying-hour utilization, and ordnance expenditures, apparently gave rise in the field to a system of attributed targets. As a result, authorized strikes conducted outside FREEDOM DEAL were reported in the data base as having been flown within the FREEDOM DEAL operating areas. Separate limited-distribution reports sent via the special security communications channels from field headquarters did, however, continue to reflect these special operations.

This dual reporting system used in the field was discovered in February, 1971, when duplicate data were received on an aircraft loss. The Seventh Air Force immediately directed the discontinuance of these attributed-target reporting procedures. Field reports indicated that of over 8,000 sorties flown in Cambodia between July, 1970, and February, 1971, approximately 44 percent or 3,634 sorties were flown outside the FREEDOM DEAL areas. The official data bases were reviewed at that time and updated as necessary to insure that correct sortie statistics were reflected. Inquiries to date have failed to disclose the source of the orders that effected the attribution of these sorties to the FREEDOM DEAL operating areas. It appears that the relevant directives were disposed of in the course of dissolution of MACV, establishment of the United States Support and Assistance Group (USSAG) and the displacement of the Seventh Air Force from Vietnam to Thailand in March of 1973.

On February 17, 1971, special reporting was discontinued and it was directed that all future reporting of these special air operations in Cambodia would be accomplished through normal reporting channels. Except for a brief two-week pause following the January, 1973, Vietnam ceasefire, U.S. air support in Cambodia continued at the request of the Cambodian Government, until the August 15, 1973, bombing halt. No further special air operations, such as MENU or PATIO, were conducted in Cambodia between February, 1971, and the August, 1973, bombing halt.

GROUND MISSIONS OVERVIEW

This section will treat those ground operations in which errors in statistical reporting have been found during the DOD review.

In September 1965, the worsening situation in the Republic of Vietnam caused the U.S. to undertake limited ground reconnaissance actions in Laos. These

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operations, initially named SHINING BRASS, but subsequently known as PRAIRIE FIRE, involved small reconnaissance teams composed of indigenous civilians led by Vietnamese or U.S. special forces personnel assigned from the MACV Studies and Operations Group (MACSOG). The teams conducted on-the-ground reconnaissance missions in Laos to determine the nature and extent of enemy activities in the assigned areas of operations.

When the enemy later began moving major amounts of supplies through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville on the central coast of Cambodia and into the sanctuary areas along the South Vietnam border, a limtied ground reconnaissance program (initially DANIEL BOONE, later SALEM HOUSE) was authorized in May, 1967, to gain information on these activities.

A total of 3,683 misisons into Laos and Cambodia were conducted prior to the termination of U.S. participation in April, 1972. A total of 5,210 intelligence reports were filed.

These low-visibility, cross-border operations were carried as a separate budget line item since at least 1966. MACSOG operations were carried as "classified projects" in the Navy budget (NOP 345). The House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee were briefed on the nature of these activities, their functions, and costs, including casualties. Additionally, the Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held extensive hearings on U.S. operations in Laos and Cambodia, including SOG operations. Detailed information was provided the Committee at that time.

PRAIRIE FIRE

PRAIRIE FIRE was the name for MACSOG cross-border intelligence collection and interdiction operations into southern Laos against enemy bases and infiltration routes. The rationale for the operations into southern Laos was based on strong evidence in early 1965 that the Laos corridor was being used as an infiltration and resupply route in support of the communist effort in South Vietnam. During the period 1965–1972 the name assigned to cross-border operations into Laos changed from SHINING BRASS to PRAIRIE FIRE to PHU DUNG. For purposes of clarity these operations will be referred to as PRAIRIE FIRE in this report.

Missions included such intelligence and intelligence-associated activities as emplacing sensors; prisoner apprehension; and area, point and linear reconnaissance by small teams; and selected reconnaissance by larger units. South Vietnamese personnel performed PRAIRIE FIRE operations with U.S. Army Special Forces or Army of the Republic of Vietnam advisors/commanders and were supported with U.S. trooplift and gunship helicopters, and U.S. TACAIR. PRAIRIE FIRE teams were trained in air-control procedures and made considerable use of tactical air and helicopter gunship support in their operations in Laos.

The table below reflects the number of PRAIRIE FIRE cross-border operations, by type, from the inception on September 20, 1965, until deactivation of MACSOG on April 30, 1972.

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971 to April 1972
Missions:							
Reconnaissance team	7	105	187	271	404	422	183
Platoon	0	12	71	56	48	16	13
Multiplatoon	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total	7	117	258	327	452	441	196
Helicopter gunship sorties	(1)	130	329	287	689	1,116	993
TACAIR sorties	155	405	1,157	635	1,016	1,419	623
Enemy prisoners	(1)	12	10	1	0	3	0
Intelligence report	21	371	774	410	748	553	175

[1] Unknown.

The PRAIRIE FIRE historical records and operational reports do not indicate how many U.S. personnel accompanied each operation nor how many operations were U.S.-accompanied. U.S. personnel were authorized to accompany PRAIRIE FIRE cross-border operations from September 20, 1965, to February 8, 1971. It is believed that during this period virtually all of the 1,446 reconnaissance team, 203 platoon, and 3 multi-platoon operations conducted involved U.S. participation.

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The operational guidelines for the conduct of PRAIRIE FIRE missions provided that generally the organization of a U.S.-accompanied reconnaissance team would include three U.S. personnel. Larger units normally included 5–6 U.S. personnel with a platoon force and 20–22 U.S. personnel with a multi-platoon force.

No U.S. personnel participated in ground reconnaissance in Laos after February, 1971. U.S. air support of Vietnamese-led teams was authorized by appropriate U.S. civilian authorities until March, 1972. In recognition of the complete Vietnamization of the operations in Laos, the Vietnamese name PHU DUNG was given the operations on April 7, 1971.

PRAIRIE FIRE security guidance precluded advising next-of-kin of the actual location of casualties since this information would compromise the area of operation. Generally, the Services, in notifying next-of-kin, indicated the loss location as either "Southeast Asia", "classified", or "along the border". On May 9, 1973, the Secretary of Defense approved the release of the actual location of PRAIRIE FIRE casualties to the next-of-kin.

In view of the special security precautions protecting these operations the PRAIRIE FIRE casualty data included in the OJCS data bank could not reflect actual locations. These casualties were grouped with the South Vietnam data. The data submitted to the Congress prior to July 25, 1973 also reflected South Vietnam. At that time the Congress was advised that there had been 76 U.S. personnel killed in action in Laos in conjunction with PRAIRIE FIRE.

A complete review of all appropriate personnel records to verify these casualty statistics has been made. Efforts to verify data are continuing, principally through interviews with those who might have personal knowledge of the locations where casualties occurred.

SALEM HOUSE

SALEM HOUSE was the name for MACSOG cross-border operations in northeastern Cambodia. When the enemy buildup of logistic and base-camp facilities in the border area of northeastern Cambodia created a threat to the safety of U.S. forces in the Republic of Vietnam, selective and reconnaissance interdiction were authorized to assess the enemy threat. The name for these operations varied from DANIEL BOONE to SALEM HOUSE to THOT NOT (when the South Vietnamese assumed complete responsibility). For simplicity, these operations will be referred to as SALEM HOUSE in this report.

The mission of SALEM HOUSE operations was basically intelligence collection and verification. The approval to initiate SALEM HOUSE cross-border operations was provided on May 22, 1967. Approval was subject to restrictions such as:

a. Only reconnaissance teams were to be committed and could not exceed an overall strength of 12 men to include not more than three U.S. advisors.

b. Tactical air strikes and/or the commitment of additional forces were not authorized across the border into Cambodia. Teams were not to engage in combat except to avoid capture.

c. No contact with civilians was permitted.

d. No more than three reconnaissance teams could be committed on operations into Cambodia at any one time.

e. The total number of missions could not exceed ten in any 30-day period.

By October, 1967, appropriate civilian authority approved SALEM HOUSE operations along the entire Cambodia-South Vietnam border to a depth of 20 kilometers. The use of helicopters for infiltration was authorized at the rate of five per month to a depth of 10 kilometers into Cambodia.

In December, 1967, with State Department concurrence, the Secretary of Defense authorized the use of Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft over the SALEM HOUSE area to control helicopters and to conduct reconnaissance of landing sites. Only two such flights were authorized per SALEM HOUSE mission.

After the Tet offensive of 1968, SALEM HOUSE cross-border ground reconnaissance operations into Cambodia were modified. The emplacement of land mines with self-destruct features was authorized in October, 1968. By December, the depth of these operations was increased to 30 kilometers in the northern part of Cambodia. In the central and southern operating areas—where specific JCS approval was required for any ground reconnaissance operations—penetrations were limited to 20 kilometers. While the restriction on numbers of participating U.S. personnel was removed, total team size remained constrained to 12 members

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and various additional restrictions reemphasized the intelligence collection and verification nature of SALEM HOUSE.

During the Cambodian incursion in 1970, authority to conduct SALEM HOUSE operations to 200 meters west of the Mekong River in the FREEDOM DEAL air interdiction zone was granted and use of tactical air operations in support of SALEM HOUSE also was authorized. No reconnaissance teams ever reached the Mekong, however, due to range and lift limitations of the helicopters involved. After the ground operations into Cambodia ended on June 30, 1970, no more U.S. ground personnel were permitted to take part in SALEM HOUSE. However, use of tactical air and helicopter gunships to support SALEM HOUSE operations conducted by the South Vietnamese in not larger than platoon-size operations was continued—when such support was required and was clearly beyond Vietnamese capability. Troop lift helicopters were exclusively manned by Vietnamese after June 30, 1970. In April, 1971, in recognition of the complete Vietnamization of the ground reconnaissance operations, the name was changed to THOT NOT, and the program continued until April 30, 1972, when all U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese cross-border operations terminated.

The table below reflects the number of SALEM HOUSE cross-border operations, by type, conducted from its inception on May 22, 1967, until deactivation of MACSOG on April 30, 1972.

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971 to April 1972
Missions:					
Reconnaissance team	99	287	454	558	437
Platoon	0	0	0	16	27
Multiplatoon	0	0	0	3	9
Total	99	287	454	577	468
Helicopter gunship sorties	67	359	398	1,548	568
TACAIR sorties [1]	34	48	0	1,239	659
Enemy prisoners captured	2	3	4	9	6
Intelligence reports	297	373	607	485	396

[1] Sorties against targets in RVN or Laos areas contiguous to Cambodia but none known to be in Cambodia until after Apr. 20, 1970.

SALEM HOUSE historical records and operational reports do not indicate how many U.S. personnel accompanied each operation nor how many operations were U.S.-accompanied. U.S. personnel were authorized to accompany SALEM HOUSE cross-border operations from May 22, 1967, to June 30, 1970. During this period, virtually all of the 1,119 reconnaissance team, 9 platoon, and 1 multi-platoon operations are believed to have involved U.S. participation.

SALEM HOUSE targets, dates, penetration points, and landing zones were submitted by message from COMUSMACV to CINCPAC for approval with information copies to the OJCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of State. Approval of the schedule was assumed if no objections were raised.

SALEM HOUSE security guidance precluded advising next-of-kin of the actual location of casualties since this information would have compromised the area of operation. The Services, in notifying the next-of-kin generally indicated the loss location as either "Southeast Asia", "classified", or "along the border". On May 9, 1973, the Secretary of Defense approved the release of the actual location of SALEM HOUSE casualties to the next-of-kin.

In view of the special security precautions protecting these operations, the SALEM HOUSE casualty data included in the JCS data bank did not reflect actual casualty locations. The SALEM HOUSE casualties for security reasons were grouped with the South Vietnam data. On July 25, 1973, the Congress was advised that there had been 27 U.S. personnel killed in action in Cambodia as a result of SALEM HOUSE operations.

A complete review has been made of all appropriate personnel records to verify these casualty statistics. Efforts to verify data with respect to location are continuing—principally through interviews with those who might have personal knowledge of the locations where casualties occurred.